

SITUATION REPORT NO. 19
INCIDENT NO. 2002-040
DATE: August 28, 2002 TIME: 9:30 a.m.

TO: Governor John Hoeven
State Capitol
Bismarck, N.D. 58505

1. NATURE OF DISASTER: Drought/Fires – The Governor issued a state fire emergency declaration on May 30, 2002, and a state drought emergency declaration on July 1, 2002.
2. DEATHS AND INJURIES: The State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has received reports of two fatalities relating to rural fires, one of which occurred on May 2 and the other on May 26. To date, a total of 11 injuries have been reported during response to various fires throughout the state.
3. DAMAGES: On August 24, a fire in Billings County, two miles west of Medora between Old Highway 10 and I-94, burned approximately 10 acres. All three Billings County Rural Fire Departments, the Sentinel Butte Fire Department, the U.S. Forest Service, and the National Park Service responded.

On August 24, a baler malfunction caused a fire one mile west and five miles south of Mott in Hettinger County. Approximately 15 acres and 45 bales burned; the Mott Fire Department extinguished the blaze.

Lightning caused eight grass fires that were reported to the State EOC on August 25. The fires occurred in Golden Valley, Billings, Slope, Hettinger and Bowman Counties.

In Golden Valley County, approximately 70 firefighters responded to a 70-acre blaze that occurred eight to 10 miles west of Medora between Old Highway 10 and I-94. Responders included the Beach, Sentinel Butte, Golve, Medora and Billings Rural Fire Departments, the U.S. Forest Service, the Golden Valley Sheriff's Office, the Golden Valley Emergency Manager and weather coordinators. Another fire, five miles east and seven miles south of Beach, burned five acres of grassland.

In Slope County, the Amidon Fire Department responded to a fire two miles east and six miles south of Amidon along U.S. Highway 85; rain extinguished the blaze.

A fire in Bowman County burned 25 acres six miles east of Scranton along Highway 12; the Scranton Fire Department extinguished the fire. The second blaze consumed two acres north of Rhame and was contained by the Rhame Fire Department.

Three fires occurred in Hettinger County. A fire, one half mile west and six miles south of Mott, burned approximately 50 acres before the Mott Fire Department extinguished the blaze. A fire burned eight trees in a grove located five miles west and three miles south of New England. Approximately 12 miles south of Regent, three acres burned; the Regent Fire Department extinguished the fire.

The North Dakota Agricultural Statistics Service reported that from August 19-25 condition of pastures and rangeland statewide was rated 29 percent very poor, 30 percent poor, 28 percent fair, 12 percent good, and one percent excellent.

The percent of soil moisture in four categories is as follows:

	<u>Very Short</u>	<u>Short</u>	<u>Adequate</u>	<u>Surplus</u>
TOPSOIL				
This Week	15	35	47	3
Last Week	16	32	49	3
SUBSOIL				
This Week	17	34	47	2
Last Week	17	32	49	2

4. RESOURCES:

LOCAL: No change from previous reports.

STATE: No change from previous reports.

FEDERAL: On August 2, Governor Hoeven requested the President to issue an emergency declaration to help provide federal funding for a State Fire Support Task Force.

5. VOLUNTEER ACTIONS: The American Red Cross provided meals to responders at the 70-acre fire in Golden Valley.

6. MAJOR ACTIONS: In response to the Governor Hoeven's request, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Ann Veneman has designated all North Dakota counties, except Mountrail and Williams, as primary secretarial disaster counties due to drought, fire, diseases, and weather-related crop damage. Because Mountrail and Williams Counties are contiguous with declared primary counties, farm and ranch operators will be eligible for the same low interest loans as those in the other 51 counties.

Based on currently improved fuel conditions, the Fire Council has determined it prudent to stand down the Fire Support Task Force Unit in Hettinger. State Radio's base station and antenna, as well as the phone lines will remain on site in the Hettinger National Guard Armory for possible re-deployment. Due to its central location, Bismarck will be the staging site for other resources and equipment. A 12-hour window for response to support local firefighters will be maintained but initial attack times may occur more quickly depending upon location, availability of human resources, and timely fire reporting by local officials.

7. ASSISTANCE NEEDED: No change from previous reports.

8. OUTSIDE HELP ON SCENE: No change from previous reports.

9. OTHER: Appropriate state, local, tribal, federal and private entity emergency operations plans (EOPs) and procedures have been implemented.

Due to the urgent need for hay in drought-stricken parts of the state, the North Dakota (NDSU) Extension Service has established a website where hay producers including those with CRP acres and prospective buyers can directly contact one another. The site is located at <http://www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/feedlist/>. The general NDSU Extension Service website has links to hay and feed listings in neighboring states at <http://www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu>. Producers and buyers may also contact their local extension agent to be placed on the appropriate list.

The N.D. Rural Fire Mitigation Guide and the N.D. Rangeland Fire Danger Index are posted on the N.D. Division of Emergency Management web site at: <http://www.state.nd.us/dem/>.

Situation Reports published by N.D. Division of Emergency Management are posted on the Division's Internet home page. The address is: <http://www.state.nd.us/dem>.

Douglas C. Friez, State Director